

BOOK REVIEW

D.M. PERSALL. 2000. **Paleoethnobotany. A Handbook of Procedures, second edition.** Academic Press, 525 B Street, Suite 1900, San Diego, CA 92101-4495, U.S.A.

Eleven years after its debut, *Paleoethnobotany: A Handbook of Procedures* returns in second edition. This classic by University of Missouri-Columbia anthropologist Deborah Pearsall is back -700 pages in all- in updated form. In the time between editions major advances were made in the field of phytolith analysis, as well as a general growth in paleoethnobotanical literature. Pearsall makes appropriate updates and responds to the critics of the first edition by making this edition more global in scope, correcting an imbalance in the first book in favor of New World examples. Also new is the final chapter on integrating biological data into paleoethnobotanical analysis. This chapter makes a case that reconstructing past human diets may be the biggest and most immediate contribution by the field of paleoethnobotany.

The book is laid out in six chapters followed by references and an index. Chapter one, "The Paleoethnobotanical Approach" includes an introduction to the field, a historical overview and a discussion of the nature and status of ethnobotany. Chapters two and three are devoted to macroremains and the techniques for recovering, identifying and interpreting them. Chapter four, "Pollen Analysis" covers the nature and production of pollen, field sampling, laboratory analysis, and a discussion of issues and directions in archaeological pollen analysis. Chapter five, "Phytolith Analysis," covers the nature and occurrence of phytoliths and methods of field sampling, lab testing, and interpreting the results. Chapter 6, "Integrating Biological Data," is the most welcomed addition to this volume. Broken into two parts, "Indicators of Diet and Health" and "The Interplay of Dietary Indicators," respectively, Pearsall gives a welcomed big-picture framework to the field. Part one of chapter six discusses indirect dietary factors, such as botanical and faunal data, and then discusses direct indicators like gut contents and coprolites, stable isotopes, trace elements, and skeletal indicators of nutrition and health. Part two of chapter six discusses predictions from dietary indicators, combined indicators for eight neotropical diets, and two archeological case studies from Ecuador and Peru. This chapter is a valuable addition to the annals of paleoethnobotanical literature by developing an approach for integrating and evaluating multiple lines of evidence concerning diets. Pearsall discusses eight diets chosen to represent diets spanning the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture in the New World tropics, which is then illustrated by two Neotropical case studies. Reconstructing diets is an important archaeological and bio-anthropological issue by which investigation can help us understand how past populations survived and prospered. This chapter is followed by a list of references and closed by a general index. Black and white figures and tables appear frequently throughout to illustrate concepts discussed therein.

Paleoethnobotany: A Handbook of Procedures is valuable for its comprehensive outline of approaches and techniques of research, but more importantly, it exists as the only book of its kind. Pearsall has made an effort to make the book accessible to both anthropologists and botanists and succeeds admirably. My only complaint is the \$150 price that is simply an outrageous amount to ask from a student or professional. I would be more tempted to require a smaller, less comprehensive, text for a class in lieu of the heavy price tag.—Kevin D. Janni.